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INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS DAKAR 000109

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SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR AF/W, AF/RSA, DRL AND INR/AA
PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [KDEM](#) [ECON](#) [SG](#)

SUBJECT: Senegal: President and Ex-Number Two Reconcile

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On January 12, 2009 Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade and former Prime Minister Idrissa Seck officially announced their political reconciliation. Seck who fell out with and opposed Wade in the 2007 presidential elections maintains his chances to become Senegal's next President. Political observers believe that this opportunistic reconciliation is designed to enable Wade to stem the fragmentation of the ruling party while setting the stage (he seems to believe) for Seck to compete with the President's son Karim for the ruling party's nomination for presidential candidate in ¶2012. End Summary.

Countering the opposition

¶2. (SBU) Senegal's opposition announced a recent move to form a coalition for the March 22 local elections. Their goal is to turn these elections into a referendum on Wade's popularity. They have been joined by Macky Sall, former Prime Minister and President of the National Assembly, who resigned from the ruling Democratic Party of Senegal (PDS) taking with him many disgruntled party members. By reconciling with Idrissa Seck, who is arguably the second most popular and well known political figure in the country, Wade hopes to minimize the impact of Sall's dissidence. It also prevents Seck and Sall from joining forces in a united opposition coalition.

The Never-Ending Battle for Presidential Succession

¶3. (SBU) This reconciliation brings the battle for succession back within the ruling party. Wade's biological son (Karim), and what many describe as his spiritual (Seck) will have to compete for their party's nomination or find a power sharing formula and or mutual guarantees of immunity after Wade leaves power.

COMMENT

¶4. (SBU) The PDS and Seck's party Rewmi have merged their lists of candidates in preparation for local elections. In a press conference Seck maintained that he is ready to serve in any position that Wade will entrust him with, which many believe may indicate that he might become Prime Minister again, given the rampant speculation that the days of Cheikh Hadjibou Soumar, the current prime minister, are numbered. What remains unclear is how or if Wade's son Karim is willing to welcome Seck back into the fold given the widely held belief that Karim help orchestrate Seck's ouster from the PDS before and that both men hope to succeed Wade. Bernicat